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derland"—Hugo Gellert—figures in buff against a vermillion ground—and Stephen Zarich—three Bacchantes dancing the can-can—have any idea of composition. On the other hand Claude Buck, who gets no prize, has a noteworthy "Cupid and Psyche" and Wille Celestino and Celestino Gambo show a feeling for composition and no little sense of color. If a competition cannot be carried out with better results in the way of distributing prizes, it would be well for the Friends of Young Artists to find some other way to help beginners in art.

NEW YORK ART SCHOOLS AND THEIR METHODS

It would be as easy to define that perfect Art School which would be efficacious for all the student's needs as it would have been for Diogenes to find an honest man in broad daylight by the aid of a lantern. Not that both good schools and honest men do not exist, but, as the result of the quest of an artistic education is after all a personal equation, so the individual temperament must decide what is the most congenial atmosphere for its creative powers to blossom in. However, a résumé of some of the New York Art Schools might be of interest and service.

Of the many Art Schools to be found in New York City, the Art Students' League is the oldest and most famous institution of its kind. Not modern in the extreme sense of the word, as that term would be applied to the Modern Art School at Washington Square. But, besides having an academic tradition, it has added thereunto all the vital life and *libido* that is in the spirit of contemporary art.

Founded in 1875 by a group of enthusiastic students, the League has grown so rapidly that it has been obliged to move from Fifth Avenue to Twenty-third Street and in turn from Twenty-third Street to its present abode in the Fine Arts building on Fifty-seventh Street. It has numbered celebrated American painters among its pupils. The late William M. Chase was for many years an instructor at the Art Students' League and the Academic banner is still borne proudly aloft by Frank Vincent Du Mond.

The Miller Composition Class is the most advanced class in the school. In this class Mr. Miller gives the student free reign to drive in any of the artistic highways he chooses, and if necessary for the individual's expression to leave all the beaten paths and conventional roads and to strike across country as it were, blazing a trail for himself in a new yet oftentimes archaic style of drawing and color composition which cannot be accused of being in the slightest way academic. Detail studies of decorative backgrounds are special features of the work of this class, whereas in the Du Mond Life Class the background is almost entirely ignored. The attention of the painter is directed entirely to modeling the figure and making it the principal thing of his picture. While it is true that many of the studies of nudes look as if they have been but lately exhumed from a long interment, yet one grows gradually to appreciate their unnatural green, amber and blue tones. The students very seldom use a model in this class; they work up their compositions entirely from the imagination and by combining sketches. The scholar-

ship-winning picture by Mary Bayne, a sort of Adam and Eve, Garden-of-Eden *motif*, is a charming example of the subtle and unique work of this class.

In passing to the Bridgeman Life Class, where anatomical construction used to be the silent slogan of an earnest clan, one notices that, while not despising construction and while the student is just as anxious to attain the "Bridgeman swing" (rhythmic line) in his figure drawing as a Southerner would be to dance the Virginia Reel, yet the introduction of the action pose into this class, [in which the model walks through the classroom assuming various graceful attitudes which the student draws from memory in the manner of the Japanese artists] the introduction of this fleeting pose has added a new zest to drawings that a few years ago were merely careful and laborious studies of the muscular development of torsos and figures. But Mr. Bridgeman realizes that life is movement (especially in New York) and art is life; hence no sleeping academic sluggard accustomed to draw motionless models will find a congenial place in his class! The legend of Rodin's method of having nude models walk up and down the studio, thus studying the supple play of the muscles when the figure is moving, has had a wonderfully regenerating effect upon the students' work. Instructors and students realize more and more that the study of Nature in her unselfconscious moments is the surest way of giving vitality to artistic expression. It is in fact owing to this simple method that Auguste Rodin has attained to the highest place in the Pantheon of modern sculpture, in spite of his rejection by the French Academical schools during his earlier career in Paris.

Very little need be said about the work of the Portrait Classes of the Art Students' League. There is nothing remarkable or notably individual here to merit especial mention. The students are faithful in following along the traditional ruts, worshipping alternately at the shrines of Velasquez, Rembrandt, Franz Hals, etc., or at times (which is worse) they strive to paint in the manner of Henri or Sargent. One notices a more inspired feeling however in the work of the modern class. Before continuing on this war path, mention might be made of the execrable drawings of Indians and cowboys made in the Illustration Classes, the models of which seem to have been wooden figures in front of cigar stands.

In the Arcade Building on Broadway we find a school of an entirely different type, the Independent School. Here is a place that is unique in America and is entirely free from formulas, documents or stipulations. Every man or woman finds there an unobstructed field for personal observation, investigation and experiment. The classes are conducted on a plan which gives the greatest facilities to all. The beginner's own soul will not be warped to fit within the narrow margin of an art creed. It will develop itself naturally from the direct study of nature and not from an inanimate cast. Whatever form of art his personal impulse and temperament will order him to follow, he will be free from the dictating influence of another personality. The head of the school is Homer Boss, the friend and helper of his pupils, rather than their tyrannic pedagogue.

The Modern School is situated on Washington

Square, now the accepted "center" of the New York art world. Within this romantic atmosphere progress should be easy; and very convenient are the "small Bohemian restaurants" where the students can gather for their repast without removing their paint-covered smocks—so runs the catalogue of the modern school. In this, the most extreme of New York art schools, Mr. W. Reiss is conducting a class in poster designing according to the most modern European ideas. An interesting feature is a class where, upon the payment of a small sum, the student can spend his afternoons drawing from the nude. The Sculpture Class receives criticisms from Miss Florence Lucius, and Mr. William Zorach directs the other groups.

The beforementioned Art Schools are devoted solely to the study of High Art but for students who are obliged to earn their living the New York School of Fine and Applied Art offers the most practical training. Here there are classes in Poster Painting and in the designing of costumes and hats, etc. If the dictum of Oscar Wilde holds true that nothing that is useful is beautiful and therefore that all real art must be useless, one will have to discard the work of these students, who make clever cover-designs for *Vogue* and *Vanity Fair*. But it must be remembered that owing to the same rule one would also have to discard the beautiful Attic vases with their marvelous figures in pale amber silhouettes against polished black and red backgrounds. These vases were undoubtedly as useful in their time in Athens 400 B. C. as receptacles of

oil and wine as our modern monstrosities of that ilk in ours. Yet their past usefulness does not in the slightest impair their present graceful shape or the superb rhythmic line of the nude bodies of the classic Greek youths that decorate their sides. Yet one must admit that it is necessary to blush when comparing a Greek vase with a clever cover design for a modern magazine.

The Cooper Union founded by Peter Cooper also offers chances of practical study in mural decoration and in ornamental modeling, but it must be confessed that this school, along with the National Academy of Design, produces the sort of student who remains a student for the rest of his life, still plodding on from year to year drawing in a hard stiff manner and becoming at last nearly as useless as the fossil of an antediluvian beast in the Museum of Natural History. The fetid atmosphere of these two schools is probably as old as Methuselah and the present ventilation is not much better than that of his day. The Pratt Institute is so well known as a place of practical torture, where the student may learn art in a perfectly mechanical system, that there is hardly any need of giving it special notice. To conclude, we may quote the pious litany of a fellow painter who was sentenced to study in the two last mentioned schools. He told the writer that he murmured every night on bended knees the following prayer: "From the National Academy of Design, from the Pratt Institute and from the Cooper Union: *good Lord deliver us.*"

Theodore Lynch Fitz Simons

THE GEOMETRIC BASIS OF PICTORIAL ART

By K. H. DE HAAS

That the arts are subject to rules and restrictions is a truth to both artists and laymen. However, one exception is generally made, and that exception is the free art of painting and drawing. Is not the very title of this article "The Geometric Basis of Pictorial Art" opposed to the conception that most painters and critics have of the nature of pictorial art? And yet there is nothing more erroneous than the belief that the so-called free art of painting and drawing is free in regard to the composition of the subject matter.

As an example to illustrate my statement that geometry is basic to pictorial art, I select Rubens's "The Descent from the Cross," which was the subject of Mr. F. Wellington Ruckstuhl's article in the November number of this magazine and which is again reproduced in this issue (page 437).

Before we analyze the foundation of the composition of this masterpiece of Rubens, let us first study the proportions of the panel on which Rubens painted this work "of sublime beauty" as Mr. Ruckstuhl describes it.

Fig. 1 shows a circle, the periphery of which has been divided into twelve equal parts. Each of the twelve points dividing the periphery is connected by a straight line with each of the other points, and there results a regular dodecagon with all its diagonals.

We have drawn with heavier lines the oblong that is included between four of the diagonals, and that has the shape of Rubens's painting. It is evident that the angle of 15 degrees is dominant between every two lines in the dodecagon, or in other words: 15 degrees is the arithmetical mean of all the angles in this linear division of the circle.

Fig. 2 shows the same oblong that is drawn with heavier lines in Fig. 1, but now enlarged to the same size as the reproduction of Rubens's painting, so that it can be compared with it. The lines that are drawn through it are the diagonals of the dodecagon in so far as they pass through the oblong. We have now arrived at the geometrical basis that underlies Rubens's composition; for, if we place the sheet with the F line-figure, 2, on top of the reproduction, we see how the basic lines in Rubens's composition coincide with the lines in Fig. 2. *Note 1.*

The very center of the dodecagon (Fig. 1) has become in Rubens's picture the point on which his figures pivot.

Compare for instance the distances from the eyes of the opposed figures to Christ's shoulder, as a center. Note how the distance from Christ's outstretched hand to this shoulder is equal to the distance from His foot to this shoulder. Mark, above